

Karlsruhe, July 16th 2014

## **Gaza: Reduce the children's emotional distress**

**Since the beginning of July, the violence between the Israeli army and Palestinians from the Gaza Strip has escalated dramatically. Civilians, and especially children and adolescents suffer under the attacks. They now carry bodily as well as psychological wounds. The Friends of Waldorf Education, who have already conducted trauma-pedagogic work in Gaza from 2009 until 2013, are now helping a partnering organisation to put up several child protection centres in Gaza.**

The Friends of Waldorf Education are still in close contact with Reem Abu Jaber, the head of the local partnering organisation *NAWA Centre for Culture and Arts* in Gaza. The Friends already cooperated with Abu Jaber from 2009 until 2013. During this time thousands of children and adolescents received trauma-pedagogic help to process traumatising events. Reem Abu Jaber explains that the sorrows of many people in Gaza are indescribable. Now many children and adolescents are being re-traumatised by the heavy bombarding, the death of close relatives, and the destruction of their social environment.

“After such shocking encounters, the first few weeks are crucial”, Lukas Mall, who worked as a coordinator for the Friends of Waldorf Education in the Gaza Strip between 2009 and 2013, explains “it is in this timeframe, that it shows whether the experiences can be processed through the individual's own capacity. An emergency pedagogic supervision can be a crucial contribution in avoiding long-term stress disorders and changes in personality.”

In view of the obvious need for first aid to the soul, the Friends of Waldorf Education are planning an emergency pedagogic first aid mission.

In order to help the children and adolescents as fast as possible in an acute crisis situation, Reem Abu Jaber and the *NAWA Centre for Culture and Arts* will start their emergency pedagogic first aid as soon as possible. As a first step, former local co-workers, who have already worked with the Friends of Waldorf education, will act as multipliers to pass their trauma-pedagogic knowledge on to new co-workers. In following this procedure, child friendly spaces can be built up simultaneously in the northern and southern part of the Gaza Strip- regions that are particularly affected by the bombing. In those centres a great number of children can receive emergency pedagogic help on a daily basis. Stabilising measures based on Waldorf education, such as painting- or art therapy, or experiential education are supposed to help the children process the devastating events they had to witness. In order to grant efficient care, the partnering organisation wants to employ 30 local pedagogues and social workers.

However, it is not only the children who are afflicted by the continuing violence; the adults also suffer deep wounds in their soul. For this reason every child protection centre also plans to include artistic activities for the parents. These offers are on the one hand designed to help the adults process their own traumatic experiences; on the other hand, they are designed to train parents to react to the trauma of their children.

As soon as the security situation allows us to do so, we will send a team of honorary German emergency pedagogues to the Gaza Strip to assist the local co-workers through in depth trainings on psycho-traumatology and psycho-education.

In order to implement these actions, the Friends of Waldorf Education are dependent on the assistance on private donors. We kindly ask you to support this cause!

#### Donations account

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*The **Friends of Waldorf Education** are worldwide sponsors of a free education system. Since 1971 they advocate Waldorf education and the freedom of education systems. Since 1993 the office in Karlsruhe organizes and supervises international volunteer services, worldwide. Since summer 2011 it is possible to fulfill a 12-month civil service in anthroposophic institutions through the association.*

*Since 2006 the Friends of Waldorf Education are active in the area of emergency pedagogy. Following the outbreak of a war or a natural disaster, they worked with psychologically traumatized children and adolescents in Lebanon (2006), China (2008 and 2013); Gaza (2009-2013), Indonesia (2009), Haiti (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Japan (2011), and Kenya (2012-2013), Philippines (2013-2014), Iraqi Kurdistan (2013-2014) und Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014).*



Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners ist Mitglied im Bündnis **Aktion Deutschland Hilft**, dem Zusammenschluss renommierter deutscher Hilfsorganisationen, die im Katastrophenfall ihre Kräfte bündeln, um gemeinsam schnelle und effektive Hilfe zu leisten.